Radiotelegraphy utilizing manually encoded Morse code is the most basic method of

of radio communications. Although it has been superseded by technically superior methods

in virtually all other services, it remains second only to voice modes within the Amateur

Radio Service. Thus it holds the unique position of constituting THE most common

mode available to all amateurs as a ready backup to voice modes.

Radiotelgraphy is "built into" virtually every piece of amateur radio communications

equipment designed for use on the High Frequency part of the spectrum, with no

further equipment required other than a Morse keying device, which can be makeshifted

quite easily when necessary. Two wires to touch together will suffice if that happens to

be required, since Morse trained operators can handle those as a keying device.

The critical difference in the operation of Morse based radiotelegraphy is the single

requirement not demanded by any other mode in use - that of operator self-training,

in the case of amateur radio operators. While the military once trained many Morse

operators, a large number of whom became amateur operators, that source of training

has largely disappeared with advancing technology. It is now incumbent on amateur radio

to supply the self-training to assure maintainence of adequate number of Morse qualified

amateurs.

Certainly no one is suggesting advancing Morse over any other method, and as an active

amateur I am active in the promotion and use of advanced digital modes, including PACTOR,

CLOVER PSK31 among others. As an active amateur I am very well aware that the use of

these more efficient modes within amateur radio is quite limited, thus they are not routinely

available for instant emergency and urgent use, as is Morse code.

While many prospective amateurs see no need for code testing for licensing, and intend

to never use the mode, there are good and valid reasons for requiring all licensees to

under at least minimal Morse code training for license qualification. The fact that most

emergency communications occurs using voice modes does not minimize the potential

of Morse to provide general communications by the widespread existance of Morse-capable

equipment and currently by the large numbers of amateurs who routinely use the mode on the

air. The assertion that Morse is no longer needed is incorrect. ANY mode so widely dispersed

withinthe general population is of potential critical value in circumstances where it happens

to be the only mode available for use. The sheer numbers of Morse users within the Service

as opposed to any other non-vopice mode makes this point incontestable.

Accordingly, I very strongly oppose any move to drop Morse code testing from amateur

radio license testing. I DO strongly advocate that Morse self-training for fully qualified

amateurs be set at code speeds sufficient to allow successful examinees to actually

use radiotelegraphy at functional traffic-handling speeds, not less than 12 words per minute

for Extra class licensees, and not less than 5 words per minute for General class licensees.

I would be in favor of allowing Technician class licensees to operate Morse on limited

portions of some HF bands for the purpose of selftraining and developing skill at its use.

Allowing Technician class licensees to operate digital modes on portions of some HF digital

subbands would also be beneficial to their self-training.

Some day technology will surely develop to the point where any possible need for maintaining

Morse code qualified operators available will totally disappear. It is clear that hasn't happened yet.

As long as substantial portions of the communications world, amateur and otherwise, continue to

use Morse, there is no justification for allowing fully-qualified amateurs to avoid qualifying to use it